



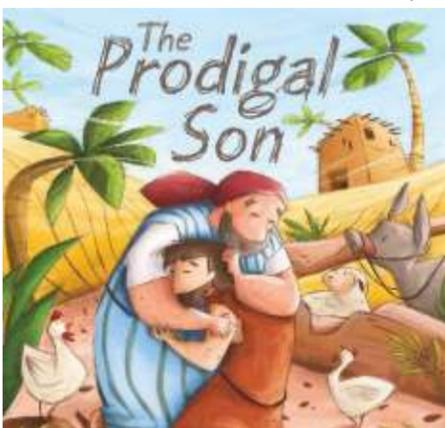
From the Desk of Fr. Leo

The magnificent story in the gospel this weekend has long been known as the parable of the prodigal son. Actually, the story was intended to focus on the father rather than on either of the two sons in the story, and could perhaps more accurately be termed the parable of the loving father.

The background of the story is that the scribes and the Pharisees were upset to see Jesus associating with known sinners. Jesus told the story in order to bring out the idea that God willed the salvation of sinners and was eager to forgive their sins. He wished to impress on his hearers the truth that God is a loving and understanding father.

Jesus, however, painted such a true -to-life picture of the younger son that down through the centuries it is this picture that has caught the attention of most people. It is typical for a young person to want to be independent, to be free of parental control, to go out on his or her own, to see and do and experience all those things that were never a part of home life. The results of his leave taking are also typical; discovering the value of a dollar, the need for true friends, the importance of a sense of belonging. That is a jolting, disturbing experience.

And we know how the young man felt. We know what it means to be alone, to feel guilty, to be



overcome with fear. After he had spent his money, all his shallow, good-time friends deserted him. He was left alone with his misery, his guilt and his fear. He began to realize what a mistake he had made in leaving his father.

The older brother in the story is also a person we can understand. When he returned from work in his father's fields, he was infuriated to discover a party going on for his "worthless" brother. At first sight it looks as though he had been cheated, but there is really little excuse for his jealousy. He should have been happy that his little brother had come to his senses. There is something revealing in his protest to his

father. He considered working for his father a form of slavery and his obedience was mercenary, not filial. Apparently, he did everything with the expectation eventually of some great reward from his father. His work was motivated by selfishness, not love. The older son represents the scribes and the Pharisees who complained about our Lord's merciful treatment of sinners.

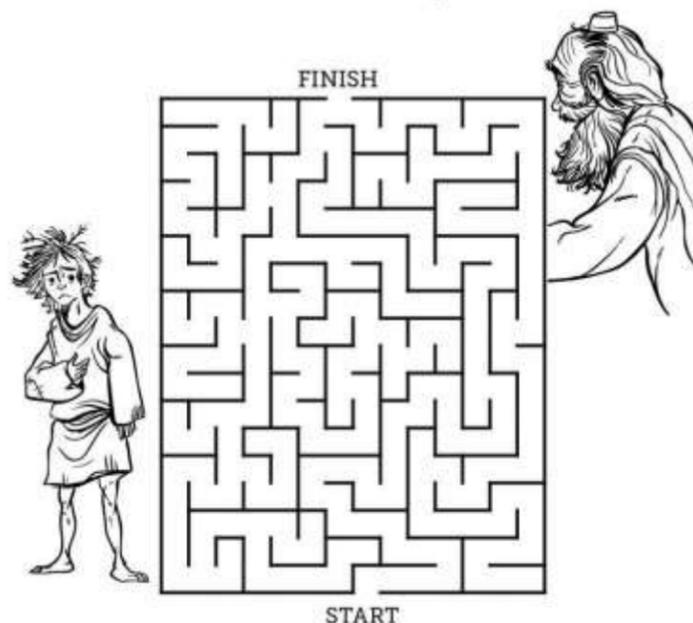
Yet, what a great love the father had for his young son. But his love is really no less for the older son. He refused to be forced into taking sides with the one brother against the other. Though each had failed in his own way, the father never stopped loving them both. With all their shortcomings, he regarded them both as his sons.

I suppose that in some way we are like the younger son, and in some other ways we are like the older son. But wherever we stand, Jesus wants us to know that God gives us human freedom because he wants a love that is freely given, not forced. Jesus also wants us to know that after even the most stupid of mistakes and tragic of sins, God will be looking for us with open arms to take us back as his children. Our God is indeed a loving and understanding Father.

Fr. Leo Alban Asuncion

THE PRODIGAL SON

Lead the son to his loving father.



Mass Intentions for the Week

Table with 3 columns: Day, Date, Time. Rows include Tues. February 1 11:00AM, Wed. February 2 11:00AM, Thur. February 3 11:00AM, Fri. February 4 11:00AM, Sat. February 5 4:30PM, Sun. February 6 9:00AM.

Sunday Collection - January 23rd

Table with 2 columns: Location, Amount. Rows include St. Rose, Crockett \$2465 and St. Patrick Mission, Port Costa \$355.

Thank you again to all who support our Parish!

Tax Time

If you need a copy of your contributions for 2021, please call the office (510-787-2052). Leave your name, phone number and address (if it has changed) and we will be happy to help out.

World Wide Marriage Encounter

Love is patient, love is kind.

Increase your love for one another on the upcoming Worldwide Marriage Encounter Experience. Both Virtual and In-Person Experiences are available. The next in-person Experience in the Oakland Diocese is March 4-6, 2022. Go to www.wwme.org to find the Experience that is just right for you!



NATIONAL HOT CHOCOLATE DAY

January 31, 2022

Did you know?

Chocolate drinks were gaining popularity in the 16th and 17th centuries, creating an important question: Was hot chocolate a drink or food? This mattered because Europe's Roman Catholics needed to know if they could partake during fasting. At last, Pope Gregory XIII decreed that chocolate was indeed drinkable.

